

Statement on the Council on Environmental Quality Chair Transition*October 30, 1998*

Today, with regret, I accept the resignation of Kathleen McGinty as Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality.

As my principal environmental policy adviser for nearly 6 years, Katie has led this administration's efforts to protect and restore our environment. From the forests of the Pacific Northwest to Florida's Everglades and the red-rock canyons of Utah, she has helped preserve America's natural legacy for all time. And from our air to our water to our climate, she has worked tirelessly to ensure our children and grandchildren an environment both healthy and safe.

In all these endeavors, Katie has been guided by the firm belief that the environment truly is a common ground. She has strived to promote collaboration over conflict and to demonstrate that a healthy economy and a healthy environment not only are compatible but are inextricably linked. Indeed, today we enjoy the strongest economy and cleanest environment in a generation. I am deeply grateful for Katie's vision, dedication, and hard work.

I am pleased to announce that beginning November 7, upon Katie's departure, George T. Frampton, Jr., will become acting Chair of CEQ. I will formally announce my intent to nominate Mr. Frampton as Chair, and will submit nomination papers to the Senate, at the appropriate time.

Mr. Frampton comes to his position at CEQ with a wealth of experience in environmental matters. He served as Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks from 1993 to 1997, and prior to that was president of the Wilderness Society. In addition, he has served as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, Deputy Director of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's inquiry into the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, and a visiting lecturer in constitutional law at Duke University Law School.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address*October 31, 1998*

Good morning. I'm speaking to you today from the Glen Forest Elementary School in Falls Church, Virginia, where I'm joined by students, parents, and teachers to talk about a problem they understand all too well: the urgent need in America for school construction. In fact, I'm speaking to you from one of nine trailer classrooms that sit outside the schoolhouse on what used to be a playground, because there's simply not enough room inside for all the students. And the 10th trailer goes up in a matter of days.

Falls Church is not the only place with this problem. Rundown schools and rising enrollments have made these trailers an increasingly common sight all over our country. Too many children are going to school every day in trailers like this one. In other schools, class is held in gymnasiums and cafeterias. I've even heard some stories of classes being held in closets. Crumbling walls and ceilings have forced still other schools to bus their students to neighboring facilities.

With a record number of school buildings in disrepair, especially in our larger cities, and school enrollments all over America at record highs and rising by the millions, the need to renew our Nation's public schools has never been more pressing. I've said many times that in this increasingly global world where what you earn depends upon what you learn, improving education must be our Nation's top priority for all our children.

For nearly 6 years now, I've done everything I could to meet that challenge. I'm especially proud of the victories for America's children our administration fought for and won in the balanced budget Congress passed just last week. We fought for and won new investments, from child literacy to college mentoring, from after-school programs to summer school programs, to opening the doors of college even wider by helping more people with financial aid. All these things will help all our children reach their highest potential no matter where they start out in life and where they go to school.

Perhaps even more important, we fought for and won an unprecedented commitment to put 100,000 new well-trained teachers in

our Nation's classrooms, to reduce class size, decrease discipline problems, and increase student learning. But you don't have to be a math whiz to know that more teachers and smaller classes means we also need more classrooms. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in Congress failed the simple test to pass my school construction initiative to help communities build, repair, and modernize 5,000 schools around our country.

I'm disappointed that Congress also blocked our efforts to raise academic standards and strengthen accountability in our schools. At a time when our children's education matters more than ever to our children's future and to our Nation's strength in the 21st century, there are still even some Republicans in Congress who would shut down the Department of Education.

Now, in just a few days Americans will go to the polls to elect the next Congress. And there's a lot at stake. Our children don't need another 2 years of partisanship; they need 2 years of progress, of putting people over politics. And we need a Congress that doesn't retreat from our commitment to hire 100,000 teachers; a Congress that makes a commitment to modern schools so those teachers can teach in classrooms, not in trailers; a Congress that puts aside partisanship and puts our children's future first.

The American people have the power to elect that kind of Congress. Our children are counting on us to do it. So this Tuesday let me urge all of you, without regard to your party, please, go out and vote for a Congress that will strengthen education and strengthen our Nation for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from Glen Forest Elementary School, Falls Church, VA.

Remarks to the Community at Glen Forest Elementary School in Falls Church, Virginia
October 31, 1998

Thank you. Good morning. First, I would like to thank Susan Fitz, Fran Jackson; teachers, Lori Kuzniewski—I was in her class; Ms. Kristen Mullen's class; Alan Leis; Paula John-

son, your superintendent; John Butterfield, from the education association; Jim and Molly Cameron, from the PTA—all the people who made me feel so welcome at this school today.

This is the best of our country's future. I look around this crowd today, and I see people whose roots are all over the world, whose languages are very different, whose cultures are different, whose religions are different, who have come together on this school ground in a common endeavor of learning with a promise that our country opens to all people who are willing to work hard and be good citizens and do their part. It is thrilling for me to be here and look at you. I have a much better view than you do today.

And I loved being with the children in the classroom. The best part of this morning so far, for me, has been answering the children's questions. They ask very good questions; some of them I didn't want to answer even, they were so good. [Laughter] And it gave me a great deal of hope for the future.

You just heard my weekly radio address, so you know that I am very concerned about the overcrowding in our Nation's classrooms. We have, almost suddenly, the largest group of schoolchildren in our Nation's history. I was part of the last large group, the baby boom generation; all of us are now between the ages of 34 and 52. This group in school today is the first group that is larger.

We have two huge problems: One is represented here, all the house trailers; the other is represented by the dilemma in our largest cities, where we have huge numbers of students and wonderful old school buildings that were unoccupied for many years. They deteriorated. Many of them now can't even be hooked up to the Internet. And we must, as a nation, face this challenge.

In the last Congress, we were able to get a big downpayment on my plan for 100,000 more teachers in the early grades to take the average size of the classes down to 18 across America in the first 3 grades. But we have to have the school buildings, as well. And I did present a plan to the Congress, that I will present again early next year, that would enable us to build or modernize 5,000 schools. If you want the smaller classes, the